

Dear Northampton Caregivers,

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has disrupted virtually every aspect of daily living. It has brought with it forced isolation and social distance, economic hardship, fears of contracting illness and feelings of helplessness and hopelessness. It has turned the world upside down. At the very same time, our culture has witnessed incidents of police brutality and violence against Black and brown Americans and a growing sense of urgency regarding social justice. With these things as a backdrop, we recognize that *all* children and adolescents have been impacted in some way: they aren't returning to their regular routines, they miss seeing their friends and teachers, and for many, they just miss being physically present at school. Struggling at this time is not out of the norm: sadness, anxiety, disorganization, frustration, agitation, and other unpleasant emotions are all typical responses to this moment. Lynn Lyons, a national expert on the treatment of anxiety, describes our collective worries about the return to school and offers parents some suggested coping strategies in this brief video:

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=662287721025630&extid=xiPwBr3LLrku21vO>

Lynn's full website can be accessed at <https://www.lynnlyons.com/>

We recognize that many students may encounter challenges with remote instruction: accessing materials, organizing assignments, managing time and getting assistance with content and/or procedures are skills that *all students* will be learning and practicing this year. Please refer to our [Special Education Resource Guide](#) to assist you with academic challenges related to remote instruction.

If you have tried these strategies at home with your student and they just don't seem to be working, begin by reaching out to your child's teacher. They can problem solve with you and are the first step to accessing other resources to assist your learner. We want to help your child in any way necessary. Though our faculty may not be directly next to your student, we are still here to help.

The next step to seek additional support would be for the teacher to complete a referral to the Student Support Team (SST) at the elementary and middle school level or the Support Team for at Risk Students (STARS) team at the high school. The SST/STARS are collaborative problem solving processes that address individual students' academic, social, emotional, and behavioral needs. The chair of the SST/STARS may contact you to find out more about your specific concerns prior to the meeting.

The SST/STARS will discuss the referred student's strengths and present information regarding their areas of difficulty. The team reviews concerns and data sources, and collaboratively creates a problem solving support plan. Follow-up meetings are also scheduled to then review the

student's responsiveness to the support plan and determine next steps in effectively supporting their needs. Caregivers are not required to attend these meetings, but are always welcome. If a caregiver is unable to attend, the teacher or another member of the team will review the plan to support your student with you after the meeting.

If you have any questions about this process, you can contact the Building Principal or the SST/STARS Chair at your child's school:

Leeds: Kira Henninger, School Psychologist, kirahenninger@northampton-k12.us

Ryan Road: Clara McCoy, School Psychologist, cmccoy@northampton-k12.us

Bridge: Andrew Koerner, School Psychologist, akoerner@northampton-k12.us

Jackson: Jasmine Sicotte, School Psychologist, jasminesicotte@northampton-k12.us

JFK: Vincent Napoli, Associate Principal, vnapoli@northampton-k12.us

NHS: Karen Hidalgo, Head of Guidance, khidalgo@northampton-k12.us,

Kara Sheridan, Associate Principal, ksheridan@northampton-k12.us